

Appl. No.: 10/631,227
Amendment dated January 20, 2005
Reply to Office Action of October 21, 2004

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A hitch structure for connection to an elongated hydroformed frame member of a vehicle chassis ~~and~~ having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said hitch structure comprising:
 - (a) a hitch base including a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis;
 - (b) a side plate connected to said hitch base; ~~and~~
 - (c) a pin member rigidly connected to said side plate and cantilevered outwardly therefrom, said pin member being sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of said pin member in said preformed aperture; and
 - (d) a clamp member engaged with said side plate and clampingly ~~engaging~~ engageable with said hydroformed frame member at such a location as to secure said hitch base to said frame member with said pin member positioned in said preformed aperture of said frame member.

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2. (cancelled)
3. (currently amended) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said clamp member is a first clamp member, and including:
 - (a) a second clamp member engaged with said side plate and clampingly ~~engaging~~ engageable with said hydroformed frame member, said second clamp member being positioned on said side plate at such a location as to be positioned in longitudinally spaced relation to said first clamp member along said frame member..
4. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 1 wherein:
 - (a) said clamp member is a U-bolt sized to fit around said hydroformed frame member.

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5. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 1 wherein:

- (a) said hitch base has an outer end which extends over said hydroformed frame member;
- (b) said side plate is positioned adjacent an outer side of said frame member;
- (c) said side plate is connected to said outer end of said hitch base; and
- (d) said clamp member includes a pair of clamp members engaging said side plate and extending inwardly about an inner side of said frame member, said pair of clamp members being positioned in longitudinally spaced relation along said frame member.

6. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 1 wherein:

- (a) said hitch member is separable from said hitch base and is selectively invertible with respect to said hitch base.

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7. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said hitch base includes:
- (a) an elongated hitch base member positioned transverse to said chassis, having a front side and a rear side, and having said hitch member engaged therewith;
 - (b) an elongated front cross member connected to said front side of said hitch base member;
 - (c) an elongated rear cross member connected to said rear side of said hitch base member; and
 - (d) said side plate being connected to said hitch base by connection to said front cross member and said rear cross member.
8. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said side plate includes:
- (a) a front side plate member connected to said hitch base;
 - (b) a rear side plate member connected to said hitch base;
 - (c) said clamp member being a front clamp member and connecting said front side plate member to said frame member; and
 - (d) a rear clamp member connecting said rear side plate member to said frame member in longitudinally spaced relation to said front clamp member along said frame member.

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9. (currently amended) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 8 wherein ~~said frame member has a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, and said side plate further including~~ includes:
- (a) a pin bracket member connected to said front side plate member; and
 - (b) ~~said pin bracket member including a pin member sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of said pin member in said preformed aperture of said frame member, and~~ is rigidly connected to and extends outwardly from said pin bracket member
 - (c) ~~said front and rear side plate members being clampingly engaged with said frame member at such a location as to position said pin member in alignment with said preformed aperture of said frame member.~~

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10. (currently amended) A hitch structure for connection between a pair of laterally spaced hydroformed frame members of a vehicle chassis, a first frame member of said pair of laterally spaced hydroformed frame members having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said structure comprising:
- (a) a hitch base adapted to receive a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis, said hitch base having a pair of laterally spaced ends;
 - (b) a pair of clamp members, each clamp member connected to a respective one of said laterally spaced ends of said hitch base and clampingly ~~engaging~~ engageable with a respective one of said hydroformed frame members;
 - (d) at least one pin member rigidly connected at a first end thereof to said hitch base and sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of a second end of said pin member in said preformed aperture of said first hydroformed frame member to thereby secure said hitch base in transverse relation between said hydroformed frame members.

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11. (currently amended) The hitch structure as in Claim 10 wherein said at least one pin member comprises a first pin member and said pair of laterally spaced, hydroformed frame members includes a second hydroformed frame member having a preformed aperture therein; said hitch structure includes a second pin member rigidly connected to said hitch base at a first end thereof and sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of a second end of said second pin member in said preformed aperture of said second hydroformed frame member.
12. (original) The hitch structure as in Claim 10 wherein said clamp members are U-bolts sized to fit around said respective one of said first and second hydroformed frame members.

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13. (currently amended) The hitch structure as in Claim 10 ~~and including wherein there are at~~

least two of said pin members and said hitch structure further includes:

- (a) a pair of side plate assemblies connected respectively to said ends of said hitch base, each side plate assembly connecting an associated end of said hitch base to one of said first and second hydroformed frame members by way of an associated one of said clamp members; and
- (b) a pair of pin brackets connected respectively to said side plate assemblies, each pin bracket having ~~said pin member positioned thereon~~ one of said pin members rigidly connected thereto to enable reception in a respective preformed aperture in an associated one of said first and second hydroformed frame members.

14. (cancelled)
15. (currently amended) A hitch structure for connection between a pair of elongated, laterally spaced hydroformed frame members of a vehicle chassis, each of said frame members having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said structure comprising:
- (a) a hitch base adapted to receive a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis, said hitch base having a pair of laterally spaced ends;
 - (b) a pair of side plates connected respectively to said ends of said hitch base, each of said side plates including a pin member having a first end rigidly connected thereto, said pin member being sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of a second end of said pin member in said preformed aperture of an associated hydroformed frame member; and
 - (c) a pair of clamp members, each clamp member clampingly ~~engaging~~ engageable with a respective one of said side plates with an associated one of said hydroformed frame members at such a location as to position said pin member in the associated preformed aperture to thereby secure said hitch base in transverse relation between said hydroformed frame members.

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16. (currently amended) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 15 wherein:
- (a) said hitch base has ~~an outer end which extends outward~~ said opposed outer ends which extend outwardly past the respective hydroformed frame members;
 - (b) each side plate is positioned adjacent an outer side of an associated frame member and is connected to an associated outer end of said hitch base; and
 - (c) each side plate includes a pair of clamp members engaging said side plate with an associated frame member, each pair of clamp members associated with a side plate being positioned in longitudinally spaced relation along the associated frame member.
17. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 15 wherein said hitch base includes:
- (a) an elongated hitch base member positioned transverse to said chassis, having a front side and a rear side, and having said hitch member engaged therewith;
 - (b) an elongated front cross member connected to said front side of said hitch base member;
 - (c) an elongated rear cross member connected to said rear side of said hitch base member; and
 - (d) said side plate being connected to said hitch base by connection to said front cross member and said rear cross member.

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18. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 15 wherein each side plate includes:
- (a) a front side plate member connected to said hitch base;
 - (b) a rear side plate member connected to said hitch base;
 - (c) each side plate including a front clamp member connecting said front side plate member to an associated frame member and a rear clamp member connecting said rear side plate member to said associated frame member in longitudinally spaced relation to said front clamp member along said associated frame member.

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19. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 18 wherein each frame member has a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, and each of said side plates further including:
- (a) a pin bracket member connected to an associated front side plate member;
 - (b) said pin bracket member including a pin member sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of said pin member in said preformed aperture of an associated frame member; and
 - (c) each set of a front plate member and a rear side plate member being clampingly engaged with said associated frame member at such a location as to position said pin member in alignment with said preformed aperture of said associated frame member.
20. (original) The hitch structure as set forth in Claim 15 wherein:
- (a) each of said clamp members is a U-bolt sized to fit around an associated one of said hydroformed frame members.

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21. (currently amended) A hitch structure for connection between a pair of elongated, laterally spaced hydroformed frame members of a vehicle chassis, each of said frame members having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said structure comprising:

- (a) a hitch base adapted to receive a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis, said hitch base including:
 - (1) an elongated hitch base member positioned transverse to said chassis, having a front side and a rear side, and having said hitch member engaged therewith;
 - (2) an elongated front cross member connected to said front side of said hitch base member and having opposite ends; and
 - (3) an elongated rear cross member connected to said rear side of said hitch base member and having opposite ends;
- (b) a pair of side plates connected to respective sets of opposite ends of said front and rear cross members, each side plate including:
 - (1) a front side plate member and a rear side plate member connected to said hitch base, said front and rear side plates connected to one another; and
 - (2) a pin bracket member connected to said front side plate member and including a pin member sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of said pin member in said preformed aperture of an associated one of said frame members;

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- (c) a pair of clamp members associated with each of said side plates, each pair of ~~claim~~ clamp members including a front clamp member and a rear clamp member, said front clamp member being engaged with an associated front side plate member and said rear clamp member being engaged with an associated rear side plate member, each pair of a front and a rear clamp member clampingly engaging a respective one of said side plates with an associated one of said frame members at such a location as to position said pin member in the associated preformed aperture, and said clamp members associated with each side plate engaging the associated frame member in spaced relation along the associated frame member to thereby secure said hitch base in transverse relation between said frame members; and
- (d) each of said clamp members being a U-bolt sized to fit around an associated one of said hydroformed frame members.

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22. (new) A hitch structure for connection to an elongated hydroformed frame member of a vehicle chassis and having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said hitch structure comprising:

- (a) a hitch base including a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis;
- (b) a side plate including:
 - (i) a front side plate member and a rear side plate member, each of said side plate members being connected to said hitch base;
 - (ii) a pin bracket member connected to said front side plate member and including a pin member sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of said pin member in said preformed aperture of said frame member;
- (c) a front clamp member engaged with said front side plate member and clampingly engaging said hydroformed frame member at such a location as to secure said hitch base to said frame member; and
- (d) a rear clamp member connecting said rear side plate member to said frame member in longitudinally spaced relation to said front clamp member along said frame member, wherein
- (e) said front and rear side plate members are clampingly engaged with said frame member at such a location as to position said pin member in alignment with said preformed aperture of said frame member.

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23. (new) A hitch structure for connection between a pair of laterally spaced hydroformed frame members of a vehicle chassis, a first frame member of said pair of laterally spaced hydroformed frame members having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said structure comprising:

- (a) a hitch base adapted to receive a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis, said hitch base having a pair of laterally spaced ends;
- (b) a pair of side plate assemblies connected respectively to said ends of said hitch base;
- (c) a pair of pin brackets connected respectively to said side plate assemblies, each pin bracket having a pin member positioned thereon to enable reception in a respective preformed aperture in an associated one of said first and second hydroformed frame members to thereby secure said hitch base in transverse relation between said hydroformed frame members;
- (b) a pair of clamp members, each clamp member connected to a respective one of said side plate assemblies and clampingly engaging a respective one of said hydroformed frame members.

24. (new) A hitch structure for connection between a pair of elongated, laterally spaced hydroformed frame members of a vehicle chassis, each of said frame members having a preformed aperture at a selected location thereon, said structure comprising:
- (a) a hitch base adapted to receive a hitch member to enable hitching a trailer to said vehicle chassis, said hitch base having a pair of laterally spaced ends;
 - (b) a pair of side plates connected respectively to said ends of said hitch base, each of said side plates including:
 - (i) a front side plate member connected to said hitch base;
 - (ii) a rear side plate member connected to said hitch base;
 - (iii) a pin bracket member connected to said front side plate member, said pin bracket member including a pin member sized, positioned, and oriented to enable reception of said pin member in said preformed aperture of an associated one of said hydroformed frame members;
 - (iv) a front clamp member connecting said front side plate member to said associated frame member; and
 - (v) a rear clamp member connecting said rear side plate member to said associated frame member in longitudinally spaced relation to said front clamp member along said associated frame member; wherein:
 - (c) each said clamp member clampingly engages a respective one of said side plates with an associated one of said hydroformed frame members at such a location as

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to position said pin member in the associated preformed aperture to thereby secure
said hitch base in transverse relation between said hydroformed frame members.